

epicenter



Celebrating the Fourth
Anniversary of the VAPAHCS
Fisher House
and Dedication of the
**Arrillaga Family
Healing Garden**



no. 6

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We have had three eventful months already in this calendar year.

We opened our tenth site of care on a chilly morning in Fremont in February. The ribbon cutting ceremony was well attended, as a large number of community partners joined us in this celebration. This clinic will provide enhanced access to primary care and mental health services for Veterans we currently serve and to many new Veterans who would not have otherwise traveled to Livermore or Palo Alto for these services. Many of the Veterans in attendance pledged to spread the word about the clinic's terrific location and pristine facilities. Congratulations to Dr. Ellen Shibata, Robert Geldman and to the many services that played a key role in identifying this site and in working so hard to expedite the opening of this clinic.

Also in February, we held our annual management retreat. The star of the retreat was Dr. Paul Helgerson, our new ACOS for Process Improvement. If anyone could make the not-so-coveted after-lunch speaking spot highly entertaining *and* educational, it was Paul. His presentation on Lean tools and principles and their power to transform our health care system was inspiring. We had interactive sessions to identify potential performance improvement projects and to further discuss the other theme of our retreat—promoting CREW—Civility, Respect and Engagement in the Workplace. From the retreat inputs, we have identified our first RPIW—Rapid Process Improvement Workshop activity that will take place in April. Also following the retreat, three teams have been formed to launch our CREW effort beginning in selected areas of Nursing, Pharmacy and A&MMS. A more comprehensive description of our retreat activities and presentations is available on Vapaweb. We will also post more information regarding RPIWs and CREW so please take a look!

We had a not-so-usual occurrence on February 17 when we lost normal power for approximately 11 hours due to a tragic plane crash into an electrical transmission tower in the city of East Palo Alto. Thanks to the superb leaders in our Incident Command

Center, no patients were evacuated and all staff cooperated superbly to ensure the safety of our patients and employees. We identified dozens of areas for improvement, the most critical of which we will correct this fiscal year. I am deeply indebted to all of you for your heroic efforts on that day. You all were magnificent.

Finally, we have completed three major triennial accreditation visits in the January-March timeframe. Our Rehabilitation staff performed flawlessly in their Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) Survey in January, which resulted in no recommendations for improvement and **six exemplary findings**. Similarly, our Research Administration shined in their Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) accreditation visit with no major findings and many positive comments on their program. On March 9-12, we completed our unannounced Joint Commission survey with minimal direct and indirect findings, most of which were corrected before the team left the site, and many positive comments. I remain both humbled by your skill and expertise and exceedingly grateful for your compassion and commitment to our Nation's Veterans. Well done!

Lisa Freeman
Director



I remain both humbled by your skill and expertise and exceedingly grateful for your compassion and commitment to our Nation's Veterans.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Receives Accreditation with Exemplary Results

Congratulating staff members for finishing a Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) survey with exemplary results, VAPAHCS' Director Lisa Freeman said, "the outstanding survey results are a credit to our dedicated staff members who provide the highest quality of service to our Veterans."

The survey of the VAPAHCS Polytrauma System of Care (PSC) teams was conducted during the last week of January by CARF with preliminary results that included six exemplary practices and 23 areas of strength. The CARF surveyors made no recommendation, which signifies that they did not identify any areas of nonconformance to the standards. This is an extraordinary accomplishment, as only three percent of CARF surveys result in no recommendations.



"To the best of my recollection, these are the best results from a national accreditation organization we have ever had," said Freeman. "Two of the exemplary findings related to the Polytrauma leadership, specifically Dr. Odette Harris, Associate Chief of Staff for Polytrauma. Dr. Harris' leadership is the cornerstone to the program's success."

Examples of the exemplary practices included not only leadership, but also strategic planning, the emerging consciousness clinical protocol, video teleconferences with referring facilities to discuss patient care planning, Fisher House accommodations and the Polytrauma Patient and Family handbook. Disseminating health and safety information and practices to frontline staff, the patient advocate feedback system, and human resource practices were some of the areas listed as strengths.

"Thirty of our Polytrauma staff are Certified Brain Injury Specialists," said Dr. Harris. "We also have a highly professional interdisciplinary team that works together to provide a holistic approach to care, which the accreditation team also recognized as an area of strength."

This degree of excellence is a rare event for CARF surveys and was noted as such by all three surveyors. An Exemplary Practice is deemed to serve as a national benchmark for other public and private rehabilitation centers to model. CARF will be able to direct public and private medical rehabilitation centers to the VAPAHCS facility when they need expert input or to use the Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center as a best practice.

"Our vision is to be recognized as the leader and preferred rehabilitation resource for health care providers and the Veterans we serve," Freeman said. "Receiving this excellent accreditation positions us as a leader and fits precisely within our vision. This is an extraordinary accomplishment that is the direct result of our staff's commitment to quality and hard work." ▲

survey comments

- There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and professionalism.
- The interdisciplinary process is robust.
- Veterans who were interviewed spoke highly positive regarding their treatment.
- The program shows strength in recruitment.
- Families served report high levels of satisfaction with the staff and services.
- The community meetings are an excellent forum.
- The brain injury team shows strength for its creative thinking.
- The organization is commended for its well-thought-out strategic plan.
- The video conferences with families served are very well done.
- The support services available including the Fisher House are exemplary.
- VAPAHCS demonstrates competent and exceptional leadership.
- The program has made remarkable progress since its last survey.

CARF reviews and grants accreditation services nationally and internationally on request of a facility or program. CARF standards are rigorous, so those services that meet them are among the best available.

Suicide Prevention Coordinators Continue to Raise Awareness

Preventing Veteran suicides is one of VA Palo Alto Health Care System's (VAPAHCS) highest priorities. The hospital has launched several initiatives to strengthen the care provided to returning service members and to Veterans of all eras who struggle with the *treatable* mental health conditions that often underlie suicidality.

VAPAHCS's intrepid team of Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) is now complete with the hiring of Fred MacRae LCSW and Kristen McDonald, PhD. Along with existing SPC Nadine Shirley LCSW, Mr. MacRae and Dr. McDonald are available to consult with staff on suicide prevention issues, to conduct staff trainings and education, and to provide outreach services in our local communities.

Mr. MacRae has 19 years of experience as a private practice cognitive behavioral therapist in Chicago, Ill., as well as six [overlapping] years of experience as an inpatient psychiatric social worker. He received his Master of Social Work degree from San Diego State University in 1989 and is pleased to have returned to a land of ice free winters.

Dr. McDonald joins the team as a clinical psychologist, having completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery at VAPAHCS in 2009. Dr. McDonald received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2008. Drawing from her background in working with Veterans with serious mental illness, she has a strong interest in helping individuals build meaningful, productive lives in their communities. "I am interested and committed to working collaboratively with staff from all areas of the hospital to strengthen our system's approach to preventing and treating suicidality," said Dr. McDonald.

Nadine Shirley has been a VA employee since 2001. Ms. Shirley initially worked as a therapist in Modesto and Stockton mental health clinics; she was one of the original SPCs hired in 2007. Her previous experience in the field of social work includes Child Protective Services and Hospice. She received her Master of Social Work degree from Colorado State University in 1997.

Currently, the team of SPCs is working together to provide an extra layer of protection for Veterans who have been determined to be at high risk for suicide. These Veterans receive weekly outpatient mental health visits for the first 30 days after they are discharged from an inpatient unit and ongoing therapy for at least 90 days after discharge. Research indicates that individuals are most vulnerable to suicidal thinking during this time period and this additional support can be lifesaving. Additionally, SPCs collaborate with providers and Veterans to develop individualized "safety plans" for each Veteran to use in order to manage and cope successfully with any future crises.

Suicide attempts are typically the product of an extremely painful yet temporary altered state of mind, which may be associated with experiences such as combat stress, readjustment to civilian life, war, traumatic events, preexisting mental health conditions exacerbated by military duty, to name a few.

A key to preventing fatalities is immediately linking the suicidal individual to a therapist who can help them realize that such a moment is not a time for impulsive

action but for ensuring safety and gaining help in exploring options to quickly diminish anguish and increase pleasure and purpose. This often involves the effective treatment of any underlying emotional disorder.

For this reason, a major component of the VA's suicide prevention initiative is the Veteran's Suicide Prevention Hotline. 24 hours a day, seven days a week anyone in crisis can call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Veterans can press "1" at the prompt and, rather than talking to a volunteer, will immediately be

linked to a trained therapist at the VA's crisis center and engage in what is often life-saving telephone therapy. The following day the local SPC will call the Veteran, provide additional therapy and help link them to all available resources that may be helpful.

The SPCs continue to raise awareness and spread the prevention message at local schools, community centers, and at various veterans' service organization meetings. They have promotional materials with the hotline phone number and educational brochures with updated instructions on how to handle emergencies. Contact them to request materials for your clinic or to arrange an in-service.





Fred MacRae LCSW



Kristen McDonald, PhD



Nadine Shirley LCSW

The Suicide Prevention team welcomes your ideas and requests. Nadine Shirley can be reached at ext. 35540 or at Nadine.Shirley@va.gov. She primarily covers the Livermore, Modesto, Stockton, Sonoma, and Fremont clinics. Mr. Fred MacRae can be reached at ext. 63736 or at Fred.Macrae@va.gov. He primarily covers the inpatient Palo Alto clinics and the Monterey, San Jose, and Capitola areas. Dr. Kristen McDonald can be reached at ext. 22691 or at Kristen.McDonald@va.gov. Her focus is on the Menlo Park outpatient and residential programs.

Lifeline provides free crisis counseling to anyone in need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 1-800-273-TALK. For more information check out, www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org ▲

National Women's Health Week!

May 9-15 recognizes National Women's Health Week. As part of that week, women are encouraged to visit health care professionals to receive or schedule a checkup and promoting regular checkups as vital to the early detection of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental health illnesses, transmitted infections, and other conditions.



Celebrating Women Veteran's Month: San Jose City Councilmember Rose Herrera presented a Proclamation on March 23, 2010 to the VA Palo Alto Health Care System Women's Prevention, Outreach and Education Center as an organization that serves as an advocate for military women and Veterans, also recognizing the "extraordinary efforts to help women Veterans in the City of San Jose and in the neighboring cities." Photographed from left to right: San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, Councilmember Rose Herrera, Ann LeFevre, VAPAHCS Social Worker and local Women Veterans from WWII to present.

How can women participate in this important event?

Women can participate in National Women's Health Week in several ways:

Women should contact their current doctor or nurse to schedule checkups and screening services.

During their checkups, women should discuss with their health care professionals which of the tests are right for them, when they should have them, and how often.

Women can learn what screenings and immunizations they need and at what age by using the *interactive screening chart and immunization tool on the website*.

Take the Checkup Day pledge and pledge to schedule at least one of the preventive health screenings during May 2010.

For more information, check out <http://www.womenshealth.gov/whw/check-up-day/index.cfm>



Celebrating the Fourth Anniversary of the VAPAHCS

Fisher House and Dedication of the Arrillaga Family Healing Garden



On April 23, 2010, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) celebrated the fourth anniversary of its Fisher House and the dedication of the Arrillaga Family Healing Garden on the Palo Alto campus.

Every day, 288,000 VA employees go to work to serve the men and women, from WWII to present, who dedicated part of their lives to serving our country. More than 3,000 VAPAHCS employees provided care to nearly 58,000 Veterans last year. However, we haven't been able to meet all of their needs on our own; it does take a community effort. Part of that community includes people like Mr. John Arrillaga and his wonderful family. They too have answered the call to honor our Nation's heroes and their families.

Nearly five years ago, VAPAHCS began to reach out to the community to help us meet one of our most pressing needs—a place where family members could stay while their loved ones healed at the hospital. Mr. John Arrillaga, in conjunction with other community support and the Fisher Foundation, built the VAPAHCS Fisher House. Since its inception,

our Fisher House has accommodated 2,167 families, providing more than 30,240 nights of free lodging.

The day also celebrated the dedication of a beautiful, tranquil healing garden donated by the Arrillaga Family. This garden has created a haven for seriously injured service members and Veterans who may remain in the hospital for months, sometimes even years. The garden facilitates the patients' healing and road to recovery. Family members and VAPAHCS employees also enjoy the garden as a peaceful refuge and retreat from the hospital. This initiative is another example of Veteran and family-centered care, making a difference in the lives of so many, all possible by the support of the Arrillaga family. ▲



VAPAHCS Launches Facebook!

VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) recently launched Facebook and already has more than 1,500 "fans" in only a few months.

A post came in recently from a Veteran who was having trouble getting an appointment from our Modesto Clinic. The World War II Veteran was 95 years old! That proves Facebook is for all ages. We contacted him that day with an appointment for the following week. Facebook provides an opportunity to address or answer questions and issues with more immediacy.

"I was one of the folks who came to Facebook kicking and screaming, and now feel it's one of our most effective means of communication, among Veterans, community members and employees...it's just fantastic," said Kerri Childress VAPAHCS Communications Officer.

There is a noticeable shift in the way communication is being delivered and social media is at the forefront of the change. Certain demographics prefer and admit that Facebook is the way they prefer to converse with the rest of the world and thanks to Michael Hill-Jackson, Student Career Employment Program (SCEP), Public Affairs assistant, VAPAHCS launched Facebook successfully.

Facebook is about six years old and still evolving. Whether you view the social media as a tool primarily for social networking, a social playground, or just a way to keep connected, and whether you have one friend, ten or one thousand...it's just another new layer of communication.

For VAPAHCS, the goal was to attract "fans" to our page, which began to assemble a virtual following of sorts. Hopefully, we can maintain a level of communication and connection with people interested in VAPAHCS news, Veteran health care initiatives, issues, resources, etc.

As with many things, the novelty may wear off, so beware of "Facebook fatigue," pace yourself and manage your time wisely between applications such as Farm War and Mafia Ville. Yes, I am aware I interchanged the names, but writing it that way seemed a little more interesting!

Managing Facebook as a quick communication tool with real-time interaction is ideal as long as it doesn't manage you. As a final point, always remember to protect your privacy, actively review and manage the content and contact information you would like to list and become familiar with your Facebook settings.

For more information about the VAPAHCS Facebook initiative, please contact Patricia Matthews at 650-493-5000 ext. 61222, patricia.matthews1@va.gov or Kerri Childress at ext. 64888, kerri.childress@va.gov.

<http://www.facebook.com/vapahcs>

facebook



VAPAHCS Gets

Greener!



In early June 2009, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) Polytrauma System of Care (PSC), under the leadership of Romeo Horvath, Administrative Officer and Sergio Cacho, Administrative Intern, piloted a Recycling Initiative. Together, with Green Waste, Inc. of Palo Alto, the PSC was able to set up recycling dumpsters for patients, visitors and staff to dispose of their recyclable materials.

The team discovered that the City of Palo Alto was eagerly seeking ZERO WASTE by the year 2021, thus Horvath and Cacho decided to join the city's movement by establishing a VAPAHCS Recycling Initiative. The goal is to make a significant environmental impact and the hope is that the VAPAHCS community joins their effort to do the same!

The Recycling Initiative caught the interest of many staff members at the VAPAHCS, including senior management. The result was the creation of the Green Energy Committee. The Green Energy Committee also partnered with the VAPAHCS Health and Wellness Committee in addition to the University of San Francisco Nursing Graduate Students, a group of dedicated staff members who played an integral part in the Recycling Initiative success.

Surprisingly, the Recycling Initiative also inspired a particular patient in the Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program (PTRP). PTRP Speech Pathologist, Marlene Specht, noted that the program was vital to the patient's treatment; not only was recycling a topic that motivated the patient, but participation in the program allowed him to work on his treatment goals. By being a participant, it offered an opportunity to share his ideas with others in the VA community as well as with his PTRP peers and the treatment team. It also gave him the opportunity to practice strategies he learned in PTRP, which complemented his strengths.

The Recycling Initiative continues to blossom as staff awareness increases. Recycling locations have been implemented at six buildings around the Palo Alto campus, Recycling Initiative signage was created, and

are in the process of placement around VAPAHCS. To date, the Recycling Initiative has implemented cost-effective dumpsters and saved the facility thousands of dollars.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this initiative, please contact Romeo.Horvath@va.gov or Sergio.Cacho@va.gov ▲



Study Looking For Participants

Have you gone from feeling on top of the world to a deep depression?

Do you need little sleep, yet have a lot of energy?

Do you have trouble concentrating and worry a lot?

Have other people noticed your extreme mood swings?

Has this caused problems at work school or home?

These are signs that you may have bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression). Bipolar disorder is a serious mental illness affecting more than 2.5 million people in the United States. The Bipolar Disorder Research Program at the VA Palo Alto and Stanford School of Medicine investigates medical treatments that may help symptoms of bipolar disorder.

This study is open to the general community as well as Veterans and active duty military personnel.

Those eligible to participate will receive no-cost medical evaluations and treatment as well as financial compensation. ▲

Bipolar disorder is an illness which can be helped with medical treatment. To see if you qualify, call the program's screening

line at 650-849-0161 or visit <http://BipolarDisorderResearch.org>.



Department of Veterans Affairs

Support And Family Education

Are you a family member or friend of a veteran with mental illness?

Do you sometimes feel confused about how to cope?

You are not alone...

Educational workshop for family members and friends of veterans with mental illness
Thursday evenings (6:00 – 7:30) Palo Alto, Building 2, 2nd floor, room A-267

Apr 1	Causes of Mental Illness	May 13	Anxiety Disorders and their Impact on the Family
Apr 8	Effective Communication	May 20	Schizophrenia and its Impact on the Family
Apr 15	Depression and its Impact on the Family	May 27	Rights and Responsibilities
Apr 22	Empowerment and Recovery	Jun 3	PTSD and its Impact on the Family
Apr 29	Bipolar Disorder and its Impact on the Family	Jun 10	Co-occurring Disorders and their Impact on the Family
May 6	Creating a Low Stress Environment & Crisis Management	Jun 17	Self-Care



The SAFE Program Mental Health Facts for Families

For more information please contact

Karen Kasch, Ph.D.
(650) 493-5000 x68869

Sue Mirch-Kretschmann, Ph.D.
(650) 493-5000 x77618

Service Awards

25 years

November 2009

Laurie Berg	Medical-Extended Care
Reba Bradford	Prosthetics & Sensory Aids
Zenaida Carbonell	Nursing-Ambulatory Care
Valerie Flood	Environmental Mngmt.
Guy Innocente	Director's Office
Wayne Keeling	Engineering
Roy Manalansan	OI&T
George Segall	Nuclear Medicine
Nelson Spaulding	Psychiatry
William Ulibarri	Contracting

December 2009

Tony Adamo	A&MMS
George Bennett	Prosthetics & Sensory Aids
Gloria Galavez	Psychiatry
Allen Hayes	Nursing-Mental Health
Mary Thomas	Nursing-Ambulatory Care
Bruce Young	National Center for PTSD

January 2010

Linda Boxer	Medical
Nieva Dionisio	Nursing-Rehabilitation
Clara Elaco	Nursing-Mental Health
Donald Gintel	Director's Office
Peter Hernandez	Environmental Mngmt.
Carmelo Hornilla	Engineering
William Turk	Domiciliary Care

February 2010

Yolanda Adams	Nursing-Ambulatory Care
Nancy Bishop-Abney	Director's Office
Gerald Georgette	Psychiatry
Consuelo King	Nursing ACOS
Keith Okamuro	Physical Medicine & Rehab.
Joanne Weith	Nursing-Long Term Care
Kimmie Wong	Nursing-Mental Health

March 2010

Victoria Layton	Business Office
Rodina Maerina	Nursing-Long Term Care
Thearesa Minix	A&MMS
Carolyn Odom	Nursing-Ambulatory Care

30 years

November 2009

David Flores	Engineering
Kenneth Hsu	Dental

December 2009

Rosalind Calacal	Human Resources
George Geddes	Dental
Marian Ketchum	Nursing-Rehabilitation
Mattie Nelson	Nursing-Long Term Care
Jean Parsons	Business Office
Linda Welch-Reynolds	Nursing-Long Term Care

January 2010

Edgar Buyao	Nursing-Ambulatory Care
Barbara Burrowes	Nursing-Ambulatory Care
Eula Cobb	Nursing-Long Term Care
Renee Kawahara	Ambulatory Care
Theresa Lee-Johns	Nursing-Rehabilitation
Delbert Lewis	Engineering
Sherry Riney	Social Work

February 2010

Hermino Adriano	Nursing-Rehabilitation
Shirley Abraham	Nursing-Medical/Surgical
Sallie Lafleur	Nursing-Ambulatory Care
Betty Tolbert	Nursing-Mental Health

March 2010

Randy Osheroff	OI&T
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35 years

November 2009

Melvin Niese	Fiscal
--------------	--------

December 2009

Peggy Allyn	Environmental Mngmt.
Peter Gilmore	Engineering

February 2010

Jacqueline Bevins	Human Resources
Gilbert Catano	Human Resources
Oliver Neal	Engineering
James Skelton	Engineering

March 2010

Efren Alarcon	Fiscal
Jerome Yesavage	Psychiatry

40 years

January 2010

Donna Buckley	Surgical
Wilthie Celestine	Nutrition and Food

Retirees congratulations!

November 2009

		yrs
Janice Beyer	Director's Office	15
Clyde Bickford	Anesthesiology	20
Karen Brown	Nursing	30
Bernie Loaisiga	Social Work Service	2
Michael Perry	EMS	23
Alexander Sze	Dental	12

December 2009

		yrs
Martin Buda	Psychiatry	6
Carol Crannell	Extended Care	21
Marion Jean Hogan	Extended Care	23
Linda Logsdin	Nursing	15
Charles Lutress	Nursing	22
Larry Shinoda	Canteen	14
Sharon Viken	Nursing	25

January 2010

		yrs
Dorothy Blake	Nuc Med	20
Gary Geisenhofer	Engineering	40
Ronald Hill	Recreation	19
Ken Marquardt	Engineering	20
Janice Robinson	Business Office	20
Geraldine Root-Mauthe	Social Work	28
Carmencita Santos	Nutrition & Food	17
Eugene Wilson	Engineering	35

February 2010

		yrs
Maria Goetz	Chief of Staff	24
Freda Lutz	Nursing	22
Terrance Oneal	Psychiatry	30
Judith Thielen	Amb Care	42

March 2010

		yrs
Kenneth Coleman	Chaplain	20
Mark Floding	Nursing	30
Matthew Giordono	A&MMS	8
Rudolph Moos	Research	34
Inder Perkash	Surgical	39
Valerie Skwarlo	Canteen	29
Evelyn Young	Volunteer	21

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ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

2010
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is published for staff and patients
of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

We welcome any comments,
suggestions or story ideas
you may have; please contact
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In the Spotlight: Women Veteran Program Manager

Congratulations to VAPAHCS new Women Veteran Program Manager Linda Kleinsasser. Linda is an RN-BC (Board certification in a specialized nursing practice). Linda also holds an American Nurses Credentialing Center certification in Ambulatory Care Nursing.



Linda has been with the VAPAHCS for 15 years; she has 13 years of progressive clinical and administrative experience as an Ambulatory Care Nurse at the San Jose Clinic. Linda previously served as a San Jose Clinic Nurse liaison for Women's Health. She also worked at the Livermore division on their Medical and Rehabilitation floors.

Additionally, Linda is a member of NOVA (Nursing Organization of VA Nurses) and AACN (American Association of Ambulatory Care Nurses). If you would like more information about the Women Veteran's Program, related events, information and volunteer opportunities, please email Linda.Kleinsasser@va.gov.

Update on Smoking Regulations

VA Palo Alto Health Care System is committed to promoting the health and safety of patients, visitors and staff. This includes providing a smoke free environment. Secondhand smoke can cause disease and early death in non-smokers. The Surgeon General's report shows that even very short exposure to secondhand smoke can cause heart and lung problems, including asthma attacks and an increased risk of heart attack.

The recent changes in the approved smoking location policy throughout VAPAHCS has been welcomed by patients, staff and guests with a resounding success. Smoking has not been allowed inside VA buildings for many years. There are designated smoking locations on the grounds of each of our VA campuses. For the safety of all, we want to remind patients, visitors and staff where smoking is and is not allowed at all of our sites.

You can get specific information at each site, but there are some general principles:

- Smoking is not allowed within 35 feet of any building entrance unless noted
- Smoking is not allowed on any walkways
- You may smoke in most parking lots (except the Emergency Department parking lot at Palo Alto), but you must be at least 35 feet from any walkway.

Help is available if you would like to quit smoking. You may contact the **TeleQuit** program at 1-800-999-5021 ext. 60557. Or you can call for an appointment in the **Smoking Cessation Clinic:**

Palo Alto, (650) 493-5000 ext. 67915

San Jose Clinic, (408) 363-3037

Stockton Clinic, (209) 946-3400 ext. 43407

Those who are not VA Palo Alto patients can use the **California Smokers' Helpline, 1-800-NO-BUTTS**. Please talk with your provider about help in quitting smoking.

NOTE: Be aware that the VA police may issue a Federal Violation Notice with a \$75 fine for smoking in a smoke free area.

you make a difference

I WOULD FORMALLY like to thank my Kidney Preservation Team for their dedication and hard work in preventing further deterioration of my kidney function. The team consists of **Dr. Frank Luo, Miriam Tapia** and **Julie Dang**. My kidney function had been deteriorating at the rate of approximately 1% per month, but through the efforts of this team my kidney function has now stabilized.

Receiving phone calls by team members after normal duty hours and on weekends concerning changes to medication was the norm. I'm extremely pleased with my VA treatment and the outstanding work of this team. —**A Veteran**

MY SISTERS AND I would like to thank **Gerri Mauth**, Social Worker, and the wonderful staff at the VA Hospice for taking such good care of my dad. It was a difficult time for us and even more for my dad.

My dad never wanted to be in a nursing home, but due to the circumstances we didn't have much choice. We feel as if we were blessed to have the option of your services. The facility was always clean, cheerful and professional. We didn't meet one person we didn't like, and we saw Dad smile many times when the nurses came in.

Sometimes I would stay in the background to watch the staff perform. Every time I saw them, they treated my dad and all of the residents with respect, dignity and compassion. I am moved by the level of service my dad received while in your care.

I can honestly say that the hospice program we were introduced to is a top notch program and I would eagerly recommend it to any Veteran. Thank you so much for making a difficult time easier for us. You were a Godsend when all seemed hopeless.

—**Daughters of a Veteran**

MY HUSBAND PASSED AWAY on February 12, 2010. His latest hospital stay lasted just over a year. As an inpatient struggling with life and death conditions for so long, it was hard for his personality to show through. But those of you, who knew him as an outpatient over the last two decades, in **Palo Alto** and **Menlo Park**, will remember his vibrant and unique character. To **all of you** who took good care of "The Great Waldo Pepper," my heartfelt thanks.

—**A Veteran's Wife**

I WISH TO PERSONALLY thank **Dr. Diane Koshimune, Dr. Allen Ceichner** and **Dr. Jack Bois** for their outstanding service and medical treatment that they provided in my care. I know the rigors of being in your position are tiring and usually unappreciated. I feel that you are an example of how VA doctors should be. You all showed wonderful respect for those you treat.

I wish to extend my thanks for a job well done and also to all those who help support you and the Veterans that you treat. Thanks you for your outstanding service and professionalism that has brought great credit upon you and the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. —**A Veteran**

THIS IS A LETTER of recommendation for Nurse Practitioner **Donna Barr** at the Capitola Clinic. I had an appointment last November and Alicia, the administrative assistant, gave me a friendly greeting after I told her about my appointment. Then Laura, one of the nurses gave me the weight/bp/temperature routine and she was very friendly and professional. Impressive.

Then I saw Donna who is always totally prepared and perspicacious. What a warm caring person. This is one well run clinic. Thank you and keep up the super work! —**A Vietnam Veteran**